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REMARKS

- Claims 1-7 and 19-20 are pending in the current application, with claims 8-18 having been withdrawn.
- Claims 1, 19 and 20 are the pending independent claims.
- Claims 1, 19 and 20 have been amended by this response.

Double Patenting Rejection (Non-statutory)

Claims 1-7, 19-20 have been provisionally rejected on the grounds of nonstatutory double patenting over claims 1-90 of copending Application No. 10/650,480 and also over claims 1-34 of copending Application No. 10/650,310.

Applicants respectfully request that the provisional rejection continue to be held in abeyance until other outstanding rejections have been addressed.

103 Rejections

Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,382,127 to Garric et al. ('Garric') in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,805,759 to Rochet et al. ('Rochet'); claim 3 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as being unpatentable over Garric and Rochet in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,517,304 to Matsumoto ('Matsumoto'); claim 4 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as being unpatentable over Garric, Rochet and Matsumoto in view of Japanese Patent No. 10256346 to Asakawa ('Asakawa'); and claim 4 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as being unpatentable over Garric and Rochet in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,439,822 to Kimura ('Kimura'). It is submitted that the pending claims, as amended, are patentable over the references relied upon.

Independent claims 1, 19 and 20 have been amended to indicate that the load ports and factory interface do not include or operate with local storage and that the transporting of the substrate carrier from the substrate carrier conveyor directly to the load port occurs without storing the substrate carrier. In other words, substrate carriers are transferred from a conveyor to a factory interface and then to a load port (or in reverse) without storing the substrate carriers (for example, on a storage shelf).

Applicants respectfully submit that *Garric*, in contrast to the claimed invention, makes use of local storage at a dispatching apparatus (300) which functions similarly to the claimed factory interface. See *Garric* col. 21, ll. 10-19. Similarly, the *Rochet* reference also refers to temporarily storing cassettes in the moving carriages between successive processing operations. See *Rochet* col. 4, ll. 25-27.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that neither *Garric* nor *Rochet* teach or suggest the subject matter of independent claims 1, 19 and 20 or of dependent claims 2, 5 and 6. With respect to claims 3, 4 and 7, none of the *Matsumoto*, *Asakawa*, or *Kimura* references cure the deficiencies of the primary and secondary *Garric* and *Rochet* references with respect to the subject matter of independent claims 1, 19 and 20 noted above, for example, because none of these references teach or suggest transporting the substrate carrier from the substrate carrier conveyor directly to the load port occurs without storing the substrate carrier. It is therefore submitted that claims 3, 4 and 7 are also not rendered obvious by the references relied upon.

Withdrawal of the rejection of the claims 1-7 and 19-20 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) is therefore respectfully requested.

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Conclusion

Applicants believe the claims are now in condition for allowance, and respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the same. Applicants do not believe any fees are due regarding this Amendment. However, if any fees are required, please charge Deposit Account No. 04-1696.

Respectfully Submitted,



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